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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: FIRST SESSION OF NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

REF: STATE 94561

Classified by Ambassador Francis Ricciardone for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Ambassador drew from reftel in separate meetings June 11 with Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit and June 13 with EGIS Chief Soliman, to stress the importance of Egyptian cooperation on UN and other multilateral issues. (Both senior officials have been urging us to advance a "strategic dialogue." Soliman is traveling to the U.S. this weekend, in part to set the stage for this.) In particular, the Ambassador urged Aboul Gheit to use Egypt's influence to improve the odds that the Council's inaugural session sets positive precedents for the subsequent work of the institution. Aboul Gheit acknowledged the importance of the upcoming opening session of the new organization, and called for maximum U.S. flexibility to assure the concerns of other states are adequately addressed. The minister welcomed additional discussions at the working level with the Embassy to address U.S. positions in greater detail.

¶2. (C) Following up on the Ambassador's initial representation, poloff met with MFA Human Rights Office Director, Dr. Ihab Gamaledin, to discuss U.S. priorities for the upcoming UNHRC session. After stressing our interest in seeing the opening session address only procedural and institutional matters, poloff detailed U.S. positions regarding the agenda, establishment of working groups, and the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

¶3. (C) Gamaledin welcomed the opportunity to hear USG positions on the Council and its opening session, and stressed that Egypt saw the inauguration and work of the new Council as a "fresh start." Gamaledin stressed the importance of allowing the widest possible participation in defining the parameters of the new UN body. The importance of regional groups, he said, must be recognized and acted upon. Egypt, which may try to join the Council next year, would pay special attention to improving the body's system of special procedures, and would like to see the Sub-Commission on Human Rights strengthened ("we do not support elimination of the sub-commission"). Egypt, he said, would be looking for something "qualitatively better" than the work of the Council's predecessor. Nevertheless, during a brief discussion on the U.S. desire to avoid country-specific resolutions -- particularly relating to Israel -- at next week's inaugural session, Gamaledin said Egypt ("within the Arab Group") would pursue "traditional Arab issues" (read: criticism of Israeli actions in the occupied territories).
RICCIARDONE